
**LEARNING COMMUNITY MANAGEMENT IN STRENGTHENING
DIFFERENTIATED LEARNING FOR TEACHERS OF TAMBAKREJO 01
PUBLIC ELEMENTARY SCHOOL, GAYAMSARI SUB-DISTRICT, SEMARANG**

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Abstract

Teachers play a central role in implementing the Merdeka Curriculum, particularly in differentiated instruction that aligns with students' needs, interests, and readiness. This study aims to describe the management of professional learning communities in strengthening differentiated learning at SD Negeri Tambakrejo 01, Gayamsari District, Semarang City. The research employed a descriptive qualitative approach. Data were collected through in-depth interviews, participatory observation, and document analysis. Data were analyzed using the Miles and Huberman model, consisting of data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing. The results indicate that learning community management includes need-based planning, structured role organization, routine implementation through CP-ATP discussions and micro teaching, and supervision by the principal through monitoring and feedback. The "Kombel Bersahabat" serves as an effective collaborative space that supports teachers in enhancing their ability to design and implement differentiated instruction. The study concludes that effective management of learning communities strengthens teacher competence in realizing student-centered learning.

Keywords: Management, Learning Community, Differentiated Instruction, Merdeka Curriculum

INTRODUCTION

The role of teachers as the spearhead of education is becoming increasingly crucial in realizing the spirit of "Merdeka Belajar" (Freedom to Learn) as proclaimed by the Ministry of Education, Culture, Research, and Technology (Kemendikbudristek). Teachers are not only required to master subject matter but also to adapt learning methods to suit the diverse learning needs of students. In this context, the implementation of the "Merdeka Curriculum" demands a shift in the learning paradigm, from a uniform approach to one that is student-centered and adaptive to differences in student characteristics.

To support the implementation of the Independent Curriculum, the Ministry of Education, Culture, Research, and Technology provides the Independent Teaching Platform (PMM) which aims to be a medium for teacher self-development, both through independent and collaborative training. PMM is part of the policy to strengthen Continuous Professional Development (PKB), which requires teachers to study regularly, as stated in the Circular Letter of the Director General of Teachers and Education No. 4263/B/HK.04.01/2023 and the Circular Letter of the Ministry of Elementary and Secondary Education No. 5684/MDM.B1/HK.04.00/2025. One approach recommended in PKB is through the formation of learning communities in schools, namely a forum for teachers and educational staff to collaborate, discuss, and share good practices in a structured and sustainable manner (Kemendikbud, 2023).

However, the challenges teachers face in implementing the Independent Curriculum, particularly in differentiated learning, remain significant. Based on initial observations and surveys at Tambakrejo 01 Elementary School, Gayamsari District, Semarang City, it was found that many teachers do not fully understand the concepts of Learning Outcomes (CP), Learning Objective Flow (ATP), and strategies for developing differentiated learning modules. In fact, only a small proportion of teachers are able to develop and implement learning modules that align with the principles of differentiated learning. Teachers still experience difficulties in understanding student learning profiles, conducting diagnostic assessments, and adapting learning processes and products based on student needs, interests, and readiness.

This problem isn't unique to that school. Research by Hasanah et al. (2023) shows that many teachers in Indonesia still use uniform methods and haven't conducted in-depth reflection on the effectiveness of their learning. This is exacerbated by teachers' low skills in utilizing learning technology and a lack of collaborative spaces for collaborative learning. However, differentiated learning is not merely a technical strategy, but an innovative way of thinking that places students at the center of learning (Hapsari & Dahlan, 2018).

This is where the role of learning community management becomes crucial. Learning communities can serve as collective spaces where teachers share, support each other, and grow together in facing the challenges of implementing differentiated learning. In learning communities, teachers learn not only from formal training but also from the real-world, contextual practices of their peers. A well-managed learning community can foster a collaborative, reflective, and innovative school culture (Ferayanti et al., 2023).

Tambakrejo 01 Elementary School, Gayamsari District, is one of the schools implementing the Second Batch of the School Mover Program (PSP). It has established a learning community called "Friendly Kombel." This Kombel is officially registered with the

PMM (Public Relations and Community Empowerment Program) and regularly meets three times a week. However, despite the high frequency of meetings, the Kombel's effectiveness in improving teachers' skills in differentiated learning remains suboptimal. Issues such as disparities in technology mastery, lack of mentoring, and high administrative burdens often pose obstacles.

Research by Labudasari, Rochmah, & Fitriyah (2024) found that effective learning community management not only improves teachers' understanding of the Independent Curriculum but also their confidence in managing classroom learning. Therefore, well-planned, organized, and monitored management is a key element to the success of learning communities in schools.

Based on these conditions, this study aims to describe and analyze learning community management to support the strengthening of differentiated learning at Tambakrejo 01 Elementary School, Gayamsari District, Semarang City. The research focuses on four management functions: planning, organizing, implementing, and supervising (POAC). By examining these four aspects, it is hoped that a comprehensive picture of how learning communities are managed to encourage increased teacher competency in implementing student-centered learning can be obtained.

RESEARCH METHOD

Research Approaches and Types

This study uses a descriptive qualitative approach, aiming to gain an in-depth understanding of how learning community management is implemented to strengthen differentiated learning at Tambakrejo 01 Public Elementary School, Gayamsari District, Semarang City. The qualitative approach was chosen because it aligns with the research objective of exploring social phenomena in a natural and contextual manner.

According to Moleong (2018: 6), a qualitative approach aims to understand phenomena holistically within a specific context through a natural and interactive data collection process. This research does not focus on hypothesis testing, but rather on deepening the meaning and experiences of the research subjects within the context of a learning community. Researchers play a direct role in data collection activities, conducting observations, interviews, and documentation studies to describe the planning, organizing, implementing, and supervising of the management of the learning community.

Place and Time of Research

This research was conducted at Tambakrejo 01 Public Elementary School, Gayamsari District, Semarang City, one of the implementing schools for the Second Batch of the School Mover Program (PSP). The school has established a learning community called Kombel Bersahabat (Friendly Community) and actively implements differentiated learning as part of the Merdeka Curriculum (Independent Curriculum).

The research implementation period is planned to be from January to June 2025, covering the pre-research stage, field data collection, data analysis, and preparation of the research results report.

Research Subjects

The subjects in this study were selected using purposive sampling, a technique for determining informants based on specific considerations, who are considered to have

knowledge, experience, or direct involvement in the object being studied (Sugiyono, 2022: 67). The main informants include: the principal of Tambakrejo 01 Public Elementary School, class teachers and subject teachers who are active in Kombel activities, the learning community coordinator, documents and artifacts of learning community activities. The selection of these informants was based on their involvement in learning community management and the implementation of differentiated learning in schools.

Research Instruments

In qualitative research, the researcher is the primary instrument (human instrument) who plays a direct role in designing supporting instruments, conducting observations, interviews, and interpreting data. Researchers interact directly with subjects and become part of the social context being studied (Moleong, 2018: 9).

The supporting instruments used include: a Semi-structured interview guide, a Kombel activity observation sheet, Documentation study format

This instrument was developed based on indicators from the POAC (Planning, Organizing, Actuating, Controlling) theory and the concept of differentiated learning adapted to the context of the Independent Curriculum (Terry, in Supomo & Nurhayati, 2018: 10; Tomlinson in Bayumi et al., 2021: 15).

Data Collection Technique

Data collection in this study was carried out using several techniques, namely:

1. In-depth Interview

Interviews were conducted face-to-face with the principal, teachers, and learning community coordinator. The interviews were semi-structured, allowing researchers to flexibly gather information while remaining focused on the main topic. Interview questions were structured based on indicators of management functions and the implementation of differentiated learning (Creswell, 2015: 225).

2. Participatory Observation

Direct observations were conducted during Kombel activities and the implementation of differentiated learning in the classroom. These observations aimed to observe actual behavior, group dynamics, and the implementation of learning community plans and strategies.

3. Documentation Study

Documentation is carried out on various school documents, such as:

- Learning community work plan
- Differentiated teaching modules
- Kombel activity notes
- Teacher reflection report
- Student learning and assessment logs

Documentation data helps to complete and confirm data from interviews and observations.

4. Data dan Sumber Data

The data collected was qualitative in the form of narrative descriptions, interview results, observation notes, and supporting documents describing the learning community management process in strengthening differentiated learning. Data sources were divided into two categories:

- Primary data: comes from direct interviews and observations of school principals and teachers.
- Secondary data: comes from documentation such as activity reports, Kombel schedules, and teaching module archives.

5. Teknik Analisis Data

The data obtained were analyzed using the interactive analysis model from Miles and Huberman, which includes three main stages (Miles, Huberman & Saldana, 2014: 33):

- Data Reduction: The process of selecting, simplifying, and focusing relevant data to answer research questions.
- Data Presentation: Data is arranged in narrative, matrix, table, or quotation form so that the relationship between parts can be seen and interpreted logically.
- Drawing Conclusions and Verification: Conclusions are drawn based on emerging patterns of findings and are then continuously verified through triangulation and peer discussion.

6. Uji Keabsahan Data

To ensure the validity and reliability of the data, this study uses triangulation techniques and sources, namely:

- Comparing interview results with observations and documentation
- Confirming opinions between informants
- Conduct member checking to ensure the researcher's interpretation matches the subject's perspective.

According to Moleong (2018: 330), triangulation is very important in qualitative research to increase the credibility of the data obtained.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Planning Learning Communities in Strengthening Differentiated Learning

Planning is the initial step in managing a learning community, determining the direction and effectiveness of activities. At Tambakrejo 01 Public Elementary School, planning is carried out collaboratively by the principal and teachers, focusing on strengthening the implementation of differentiated learning. This process includes identifying needs, developing an activity schedule, and developing a training program tailored to the challenges in the field.

Table 1.

Results of the Learning Community Planning Research

No	Planning Aspects	Research Findings	Data source
1	Identifying teacher needs	Teachers have difficulty understanding CP, TP, and ATP in the Independent Curriculum	Interview with teachers and principals
2	Preparation of the Kombel schedule	Kombel activities are held every Tuesday–Thursday after students come home from school.	Kombel schedule documentation
3	Formulation of work program	Prepared from the beginning of the school year; includes training, micro teaching, and preparation of teaching modules	School annual work plan

4	Determining the focus of differentiation	the Focus on content, processes, and learning products according to students' learning profiles.	Classroom observation & teaching modules
5	The role of the principal in planning	The principal leads the process in a participatory manner with the teachers.	Principal interview

The data above demonstrates that the learning community planning at Tambakrejo 01 Elementary School has been implemented quite systematically. Determining teacher needs was conducted using a reflective approach through discussions and interviews. A regular activity schedule and specific training programs helped teachers understand differentiated learning in stages. The principal played a central role in ensuring all teachers were actively involved in the Friendly Community registered on the Merdeka Mengajar (PMM) Platform. The focus on content, process, and product demonstrates that the plan was guided by the principle of in-depth and contextual differentiation. This aligns with the planning function in POAC management theory, which requires organizations to establish strategic steps before moving on to the next stage.

Organizing Learning Communities in Strengthening Differentiated Learning

Organization is the process of arranging resources and allocating responsibilities to achieve predetermined goals. At Tambakrejo 01 Public Elementary School, the organization of the learning community (Kombel Bersahabat) is carried out through the establishment of an organizational structure, the division of teacher roles, and the establishment of a communication system. This step aims to create an effective collaborative work environment for implementing differentiated learning.

Table 2.

Organizing Learning Communities in Strengthening Differentiated Learning			
No	Organizing Aspects	Research Findings	Data source
1	Kombel organizational structure	An organizational structure was formed: coordinator, secretary, person in charge of activities, internal resource person.	Kombel Documents & Interviews
2	Division of work groups	Teachers are divided by level (lower & upper grades) for effective discussion and collaboration.	Observation & documentation of activities
3	Competency-based assignments	IT-savvy teachers are assigned to accompany other teachers in using PMM and teaching modules	Interview with teachers and principals
4	Collaboration between teachers	Each meeting was filled with CP-ATP discussion activities, sharing good practices, and micro-teaching.	Documentation of the Kombel meeting
5	Communication system between members	Using WhatsApp groups and regular face-to-face meetings as a medium for communication and coordination, Kombel	Observation & documentation of communication

The organization of the learning community at Tambakrejo 01 Elementary School demonstrates an effective managerial approach. The establishment of an organizational

structure facilitates coordination of activities and clarifies the flow of responsibilities. Teachers are divided by level, allowing for more specific discussions tailored to the needs of students in each class. The implementation of collaborative systems such as mentoring between teachers, sharing of good practices, and CP/ATP discussions demonstrates a spirit of mutual cooperation and increased collective professionalism.

The principal also applies the principle of distributed leadership by empowering potential teachers to serve as resource persons or facilitators in community activities. A digital communication system also facilitates smooth coordination among members, especially under time constraints. All of this represents a concrete implementation of the organizing function in management, where the division of structures and responsibilities is structured to support the shared goal of differentiated learning.

Implementation of Learning Communities in Strengthening Differentiated Learning

Implementation is the stage of actualizing previously developed plans and organizations. During this stage, teachers routinely carry out learning community activities through collaboration, training, discussions, differentiated learning practices, and learning reflection. The Friendly Community at Tambakrejo 01 Public Elementary School serves as a practical platform for teachers to implement differentiation strategies in accordance with the Independent Curriculum.

Table 3.

Research Results on the Implementation of Learning Communities

No	Implementation Aspects	Research Findings	Data source
1	Implementation schedule	Kombel is held regularly every Tuesday-Thursday after school	Documentation of Kombel activities
2	Main activities	Teaching module training, CP-ATP discussions, micro teaching, utilization of PMM	Observation & documentation
3	Teacher participation	The majority of teachers actively participate, although some are still passive in differentiated practices.	Observation & interview
4	Material discussed	Focus on developing differentiated modules, content-process-product strategies, learning reflection	Kombel meeting notes & instruments
5	Implementation constraints	Time constraints, IT skill gaps between teachers, and after-school fatigue	Interview with teachers and principals

The Kombel program at Tambakrejo 01 Elementary School has been running with structured frequency and content. Routine activities three times a week ensure continuity in the teacher learning process. Microteaching and training on teaching modules encourage the improvement of differentiation skills, particularly in the content and learning process.

However, implementation was not without challenges, such as limited time because it was conducted outside of teaching hours, and a gap in digital technology skills in utilizing the PMM platform. Despite this, the spirit of collaboration among teachers was strong and a key strength of Kombel's implementation.

This demonstrates that the management function in the actuating or mobilizing stage has been implemented. Teachers are mobilized through motivation, facilitating roles, and a reflective approach to create learning that truly addresses students' needs.

Supervision of Learning Communities in Strengthening Differentiated Learning

Supervision is a crucial management function to ensure all activities proceed according to plan and achieve goals. In the context of the learning community at Tambakrejo 01 Public Elementary School, supervision is carried out by the principal to monitor teacher engagement, the quality of the implementation of Kombel activities, and their impact on differentiated learning.

Table 4.
Results of the Learning Community Supervision Research

No	Supervisory Aspects	Research Findings	Data source
1	Monitoring of Kombel activities	The principal regularly attends Kombel and records teacher attendance and activities.	Kombel's observation & documentation
2	Evaluation of activity implementation	Carried out periodically through joint reflection, discussion, and teacher performance assessment in Kombel	Interview & evaluation documents
3	Feedback and follow-up	The principal provides direct input and conducts additional training if there are obstacles.	Principal & teacher interview
4	Activity reporting	Kombel reports the results of activities through journals or activity logs which are reviewed by the principal.	Activity log documentation
5	Indicators of success	Increasing teacher involvement, developing differentiated teaching modules, and the ability to develop CP-ATP	Results of interviews and observations

The principal has implemented the supervisory function of the learning community at Tambakrejo 01 Elementary School quite effectively. His presence at Kombel activities and regular evaluations is crucial for maintaining consistent implementation. In addition to monitoring teacher attendance and activities, the principal actively provides constructive feedback and encourages further training as needed.

Reporting activities in the form of journals or activity logs helps document teachers' learning processes and facilitates performance assessments. The impact is evident in the improved quality of teaching modules and teachers' understanding of differentiated learning. All of this demonstrates that the controlling function in management has been implemented systematically and adaptively to teacher development needs.

Discussion

This study shows that the learning community management implemented at Tambakrejo 01 Elementary School, Gayamsari District, Semarang City, plays a significant role in supporting the strengthening of differentiated learning in the Independent Curriculum era. The managerial processes within the learning community, including planning, organizing, implementing, and supervising, have been carried out systematically and collectively under the leadership of the principal. These findings confirm that learning

transformation is not solely determined by individual teachers but is strongly supported by a collective support system through a professional learning community framework.

In terms of planning, *Kombel Bersahabat* successfully identified the teachers' real needs, such as difficulties understanding CP (Learning Outcomes), ATP (Learning Objective Flow), and strategies for implementing differentiated learning. By actively involving teachers in developing schedules, work programs, and targets for community activities, the planning process becomes more adaptive to the school context. This needs-based planning aligns with the research findings of Labudasari et al. (2024), which showed that teacher involvement in the planning stage increases a sense of community ownership and impacts enthusiasm for participating in activities.

In terms of organization, the establishment of the *Kombel* organizational structure allows for more focused implementation of activities. Teachers are divided into groups based on grade level and competency, and supported by online communication systems such as WhatsApp. The principal, as instructional leader, successfully delegated roles and empowered potential teachers as internal resource persons. This aligns with Tujo's (2024) findings that a clear and collaborative organizational structure within a learning community creates a conducive and productive work climate for teacher professional development.

In terms of implementation, *Kombel* serves not only as a discussion forum but also as an arena for direct practice, such as micro-teaching, analysis of differentiated teaching modules, and reflection on learning. *Kombel* at Tambakrejo 01 Elementary School is held routinely three times a week, which is concrete evidence of the teachers' commitment to self-development. Despite facing challenges such as time constraints and gaps in IT skills, teachers demonstrate active participation. Research by Hasanah et al. (2023) supports this finding, stating that the implementation of intensive learning communities improves teachers' competence in implementing differentiated, student-centered learning.

In terms of supervision, the principal plays a key role as a supervisor and facilitator. Regular monitoring of activities, evaluation through reflection, and feedback are conducted. Reporting activities through daily journals or activity logs is also an important tool in supervision. This reinforces the assertion by Setiawan et al. (2022) that the principal's role in supervising learning communities can increase teacher engagement and the effectiveness of learning transformation.

Milaini's (2023) research shows that effective learning communities not only improve teachers' pedagogical competence but also shift the learning paradigm to be more adaptive to students' needs. Meanwhile, Khusna's (2023) research highlights the importance of teacher involvement in lesson planning and reflection to reduce monotonous teaching practices. Both findings corroborate this finding, stating that *Kombel* can foster teachers' reflective awareness and enhance professional motivation.

The results of this study imply that structured learning community management can be an effective strategy for improving teacher competency, particularly in implementing differentiated learning according to the Independent Curriculum. The *Kombel* serves not only as a discussion forum but also as a collaborative space for sharing good practices, developing teaching materials, and addressing classroom learning challenges. The principal plays a crucial role as a facilitator and director in maintaining the sustainability and effectiveness of the learning community. Therefore, other schools can use this approach as a model for sustainable and contextual teacher professional development. Furthermore, the results of this

study also highlight the need for government policy support to strengthen and facilitate learning communities in educational institutions, so that the implementation of the Independent Curriculum can be more optimal in practice.

CONCLUSION

Based on the research findings, it can be concluded that learning community management at Tambakrejo 01 Elementary School, Gayamsari District, Semarang City, plays a crucial role in strengthening the implementation of differentiated learning. Learning community planning is carried out collaboratively between the principal and teachers, focusing on identifying learning needs, developing work programs, and establishing strategies relevant to the Independent Curriculum. The learning community has been systematically organized through the establishment of an organizational structure, role allocation, and teacher grouping based on level and competency. In practice, learning community activities are conducted routinely and include training, discussions, the development of teaching modules, and microteaching practices that can increase teacher engagement and understanding of differentiated learning. Meanwhile, supervision is carried out by the principal on an ongoing basis through monitoring, evaluating activities, providing feedback, and providing follow-up training. Overall, well-structured learning community management has proven effective in encouraging teacher competency improvement and making differentiated learning more effectively implemented in the classroom. This research confirms that professionally managed learning communities can be a strategic platform for realizing student-centered learning, as embodied in the spirit of the Independent Curriculum.

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